

# THE ELEVENTH MINUTE

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Marika Barnett

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**THE ELEVENTH MINUTE**

**By Marika Barnett**

**SYNOPSIS:** A man/woman has written the greatest ten-minute play in the history of the universe! The only problem is . . . it's one minute too long.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2 either)*

A.....Male or female; age anywhere between 18 and 88. B's cynical friend

B.....Male or female; age anywhere between 18 and 88. Author of an eleven-minute play

**SCENE:** A café.

**TIME:** Late morning.

**SETTING:** At least one small table sits in the middle of the stage with two chairs. A coffee bar is nearby.

**AT RISE:** *A is sitting at the table, setting up a chess set. B is standing at the coffee bar pouring his coffee.*

**B:** *(Pours his coffee, throws his bag to his side of the table, walks over with his coffee, and sits down. He makes the first move on the chess board and hits the timer. Says with great enthusiasm.)*  
I wrote it!

**A:** *(Looks up in surprise.)* What?

**B:** *(With great sarcasm.)* What? My last will and testament! What have I been working on for months? My ten-minute play.

**A:** You have been working on a ten-minute play for months?

**B:** Why not? It is just as difficult as a three-act play. Even more difficult!

**A:** Why is it more difficult?

**B:** Because a three-act play can be of any length - well, theoretically speaking. This, however, can only last for ten minutes. That's the problem!

**A:** What's the problem?

**B:** The ten minutes.

**A:** Why is that a problem?

**B:** Because my play is eleven minutes long. I have to take away one minute.

**A:** It should be easy to take away a few lines. Any few lines. They can't be important.

**B:** Why can't they be important?

**A:** What can you say of any importance in ten minutes?

**B:** . . . But the play is currently eleven minutes long.

**A:** *(Sarcastically.)* I beg your pardon! What can you say of any importance in eleven minutes?

**B:** A lot of things. This happens to be a drama that brings up many, many deep philosophical questions.

**A:** In ten . . . excuse me, in eleven minutes?

**B:** Forget about the ten minutes or eleven minutes. *(Hands the script to A.)* I need help. Will you be serious or not?

**A:** So what is this deeply philosophical play about?

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- B:** Life! It is about life. Why do we exist? What is our destiny? Where do we come from? Where are we heading? It is about men and women, their relationships and, in general, our relationship to the universe.
- A:** I hope the ten minutes didn't limit your scope of subjects.
- B:** I didn't allow it to limit me. All along, of course, there are accurate references to world history.
- A:** Of course!
- B:** And all the major scientific achievements of mankind.
- A:** (*To himself.*) No wonder it stretched into eleven minutes.
- B:** Yes, that is my problem. I must cut something out.
- A:** Who are the characters in the play? How many characters are there?
- B:** A hundred twenty-seven. At the moment, one hundred-twenty-seven, but if I make the play a minute shorter, I probably can get away with just a hundred twenty-six.
- A:** (*Gets up.*) Oh, great! Then we really have to work on getting rid of that extra minute. One hundred twenty-seven actors might be very difficult to line up.
- B:** Yes, that is where I need your help. I am much too involved. For me, every second of this play is important. It would be less painful to cut out pieces of my body than to cut out lines from this play.
- A:** Well, let's get to work. You already told me what it is all about. I need to know who the characters are. Well, not all hundred twenty-seven of them. Let's start with a few. Just to get an idea.
- B:** There will be God, Mohamed, Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Moses, to list a few who are more familiar.
- A:** Wow! Quite a cast!
- B:** There will be Shakespeare, Alexander the Great, Louis Pasteur, Ramses the II, Picasso, Socrates, King Arthur, Britney Spears, Napoleon, Frederic the Great . . .
- A:** (*Interrupts right after Britney Spears' name.*) I hope you can find actors who can play such important roles.
- B:** My real problem will be with the Hindu Gods. They all have at least eight arms.

- A:** That's the least of it! One has three eyes, another five heads, not to mention the one with the blue skin. *(To himself.)* Hmmmm! Blue skin. Eight arms. Five heads. I bet the actor's union will have some weird rules against that. *(Turns to B again.)* But, what is the premise of this play?
- B:** The premise? I told you! I want to answer the eternal questions of mankind. It is about time that someone handled this subject seriously.
- A:** *(To himself.)* Yes, yes it has been badly neglected up till now.
- B:** Why do I have the feeling that you are not taking me seriously?
- A:** Look, if you want my help, you have to be patient with me. I promise I will help you get rid of that one extra minute.
- B:** Yes, I'd appreciate it, but that is just it. There is no extra minute here. Every syllable of this play is essential.
- A:** Still, if you are serious about this, we have to start somewhere. I admit that the beginning and the end of every play are usually very important, but you can always cut out something in the middle.
- B:** *(Grabs the left side of his chest.)* You'd tear out my heart, *(Grabs the right side of his chest.)* my lungs, *(Grabs his belly)* my vital organs? They are all in the middle . . .
- A:** I don't need this. Surgery is over! *(Throws B the script, gets up and walks away.)* Goodbye!
- B:** No, no, please! I'll control myself. I need your help. Please bear with me!
- A:** Okay! For the last time, let's see if we can remove one minute's worth of lines in the middle.
- B:** What exactly do you call the middle? Where is the middle?
- A:** Well, you told me some time ago that each page equals one minute on stage, so eleven minutes should equal eleven pages. The middle should be somewhere on page six. Let's get rid of that sixth page. Is that possible?

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